



Spring 1990, Vol. 1, No. 1

Coastlore, P.O. Box 3, Harkers Island, NC 28531

**Welcome aboard!** At long last the *Mailboat* has arrived. We hope you find our initial edition both enjoyable and informative. We encourage your comments, suggestions, and ideas.

For generations the "mailboat" was the primary means of communication, and oftentimes transportation, for the people of these isolated communities along the coast. It was their daily link to the rest of the world, before radio and TV, bridges and highways. By the mailboat news came and went, as did visitors, doctors, missionaries, politicians, salesmen, and the mail too! On the mailboat folks would go to town for groceries, medicines, and supplies. First by sail, then by motor, the mailboat was a vital connection to the mainland.

We hope that this "mailboat" will become important to you as well; not only to *inlanders* wanting to know more about the coast, but coastal people learning about other coastal people. For we are *still* isolated in a sense ... even with our highways, bridges, ferries, phone lines, cable TV and fax machines. We need a connection from island to island, person to person---and to the rest of the world.

Whether we are native or newcomer, mainlander or islander, the issues that face any of us, face us all. As development, tourism, and industrial pollution continue to change our landscape and lifestyle, it becomes everyone's problem. Progress and change certainly will continue, but without some effort to preserve and conserve the richness of our resources, we all will be losers.

With the *Mailboat* we hope to accomplish several objectives. First, to collect, preserve, record and document the character of our past; secondly, to learn from each other and share with one another what we have left of

## *"...the big event of the day"*

*by Charles O. Pitts, Jr.*

*"...The new mail route is on now and if the tides don't get better Capt. Cleveland will have to use an aeroplane or walk to the Light House wharf."*

*The Beaufort News*  
7 January 1926

Captain Cleveland was Cleveland Davis of Harkers Island. The Light House wharf was at Cape Lookout. He "used" a boat to carry the mail.

The vessel was built by Carl Graham Gaskill of Straits and named for his son. The "Orville G" had carried freight and passengers from down east Carteret County to Beaufort until sold to Mr. Davis and put into service as a mail carrier. Charles and Cleveland Davis and Kelly Willis were to "carry the mails" for years -- by boat. Earl Cranston Davis, Charles' son, was even married on the mailboat!

One of the Depression era murals painted in 1940 and hanging today in the Beaufort Post Office depicts the "Orville G" on its way to Cape Lookout. The stormy sky and turbulent sea of the painting reflect elements that have always dominated Carteret County history -- its settlement, livelihood and intercourse.

Weather and Water. Listen:  
Nor'easter, hurricane, mullet blow.  
Tornado, waterspout. Creek,  
prong, run. Swamp, marsh, slue.  
Cove, bay, sound.

The county is sited between the Latitudes 76 and 78 degrees West and Longitudes 34 and 35 degrees North. Its boundaries encompass approximately three hundred square miles within which are found barrier islands, inlets, lumps, shoals, marshes, "the Straits" and "the Thorofare." Interdicted by rivers and creeks, the boundary lines



Harkers Island Post Office (c. 1927-1951), the last post office to be serviced by mailboat.  
Photo courtesy of Suzanne Guthrie Yeomans.

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## Looking Back

If there is any one issue that separates a native coastal resident from a newcomer it is a hurricane. Before 1989's devastating hurricane season the new generation of coastal visitors and property buyers had failed to appreciate -- maybe even ignored -- the memories of those folks who had lived through the reality of a "storm." *Hugo* proved memories to have been well-founded.

For the people of South Carolina's coastline 1989 will be the year talked about for generations. The destruction and suffering that resulted from *Hugo*'s fury was on televisions, magazines and newspapers. We all sorrowed for their losses, their pain and confusion; their helplessness against a force so much greater than they could have imagined. We all reached

out to help, especially those of us along the coast. "There but for the grace of God are we ..." was the common bond.

South Carolina has not been the only area to "know" a hurricane. Our shores have had their share. As long as people can remember there have been storms.

The following are accounts of hurricanes as they have affected eastern Carteret and Hyde Counties. They are eyewitness descriptions by people who had lived through all or most of the events they report. These are personal stories that detail the drama and suffering caused by hurricanes in the first half of this century; before television and weather stations could give fair warning. Their memories are still very real.

### "Data on Hurricanes for Sea Level, Carteret County"

by Harrell C. Taylor Sr.

Sea Level, with a population of about 450, is situated in eastern Carteret County. Sea Level is where elevation begins and therefore is about the lowest community in North Carolina. From the standpoint of water damage caused by hurricanes it is estimated that on an average 75% of the community is covered by sea water, including sea water in homes.

During one of the earliest hurricanes, probably in the 1870's, Sea Level was completely covered by sea water. This story was handed down by the old folks. They also told the story that on the highest point in Sea Level, cattle were drowned while watermelons and other citrus fruit drifted by second story windows. In this great hurricane, 100% of Sea Level was covered by sea water.

A great storm came out of the southeast in 1879, known as the "Hurricane of 1879." Considerable damage was done to all the coastal area, including Sea Level. A hotel was washed away at Beaufort with the loss of two lives.

The hurricane of August 1899 was certainly one of the most destructive in property and lives lost. In this great hurricane, Sea Level lost ten of the best commercial fishermen; eight of them being men with families.

The hurricane of 1913 was equal to a storm of extra high tides and destruction of property, especially fishing crafts. Boats were carried ashore, while many were driven high upon the land. It took many weeks to re-float

### "The Storm of 1899"

from Ocracokers by Alton Ballance

According to reports from the observer at the Hatteras Weather Bureau, the 1899 storm was one of the worst in the memory of anyone living at Hatteras at that time. The observer, S. L. Doshoz, also wrote that Ocracoke was hit as badly as Hatteras.

Effects of the hurricane began on August 16 with easterly gale force winds, which eventually reached hurricane strength during the early morning hours of August 17. By one o'clock that afternoon, the winds had gradually changed to the northeast and reached 93 miles per hour, with occasional gusts up to 120 to 140 miles per hour. After a brief lull in the hurricane that night, the wind shifted to the east-southeast and increased once again to 60 and 70 miles per hour. Gale force winds from the south and eventually the southwest blew throughout the day on August 18, and squally weather continued even on the following day.

The observer also included in his report that the tide had reached one to four feet in most houses (over land the tide was supposed to have been from three to ten feet), and that not only homes but also boats and fishing equipment suffered extensive damage. Though no lives were lost at Hatteras, the observer wrote that a pleasure boat at Ocracoke was destroyed, and several people from the boat, who were from Washington, North Carolina, were drowned. Countless chickens, hogs, sheep, and cattle were also lost.

Before their deaths, I talked with "Miss" Sara Ellen Gaskill, then about 100 years old, and Miss Lillian Jackson, almost 90 years old, about the 1899 hurricane. To them the "old August storm" was one

### "The Storm of 1933"

by Dollie Carraway

Whenever September rolls around, people in South River ... begin talking about storms. And the one that always gets into the conversation is the storm of September 15, 1933. The storm hit the area before names were given to hurricanes, so it became the '33 storm.

The population of South River was small in the 1930's. There were 19 houses from the Big Creek area to Garbacon Creek in Neuse River. There was a church and a school building. There were 17 families, totaling about 95 people.

Early on the morning of Friday, September 15, 1933, rain was falling. As the day wore on, the skies became an ominous gray. There was no other warning that this was anything more than a nor'easter expected this time of year. No one knew how bad it would get. Although there always had been fall storms, this one would be the worst in the memories of the folks of South River.

I was almost 6 years old, and I remember we children measured to see how fast the tide was rising by poking sticks in the ground as the water rose up the hill on the road near our house, which stood on one of the highest spots in the community.

There was little preparation ... because no one realized what was about to happen. But at both ends of the community, the tide had begun to flood into people's yard. But again, this was not unusual because the land was low and the northeast winds pushed water inland, many times covering low spots in the road.

This time, the hurricane was bringing water from the Atlantic Ocean and



## Ending the Darkness

## North Carolina's First Four Lighthouses

by Connie Mason

The need for lights on land to guide vessels at sea is not a new one. Homer's Iliad of 900, B. C. recounts the apprehensions of sailing blindly along unknown waters and the subsequent relief that is brought by the appearance of an identifiable light from land.

*So to night wandering sailors pale with fears  
Wide o'er the watery waste a light appears,  
Which on the far seen mountain blazing high  
Streams from lonely watch tower to the sky.*

The low, ever shifting sandy shoals of the Outer Banks of North Carolina and the surrounding turbulent waters provided the 18th and 19th century American sailor with the ingredients for the same nautical nightmares and fears of those experienced by his ancient Greek counterpart. The great need for reliable guiding lights which signal a danger, safe port, or a as a marker of bearing and position was indicated by the coast's epithet, "The Graveyard of the Atlantic."

Before the American Revolution, there was no concerted effort in establishing the urgently needed navigational aids in North Carolina. It was not until eight years after the War that attention was given to the building of a lighthouse. 1784 marked the year the young state of North Carolina started collecting money for her first lighthouse to be located on Bald Head Island at the entrance of the Cape Fear River. The Cape Fear River and Ocracoke Inlet where the State's vital ports of entry for the importing and exporting of goods. Making these entries safer for ships and shipping was strategic to the economy of North Carolina. On August the 7th, 1789, the Federal government assumed the duties and responsibilities for all navigational aides from the individual states. They took over the job of building the Bald Head Island Lighthouse and by 1795, it was completely equipped, lighted, and in active service.

Congress authorized the building of North Carolina's second lighthouse, "on an island in the harbor of Ocracoke [Inlet] called Shell Castle . . ." in May, 1794. The exact date this lighthouse was fully functional is not presently known but records indicate that sometime between 1798 and 1803 this light was in service.

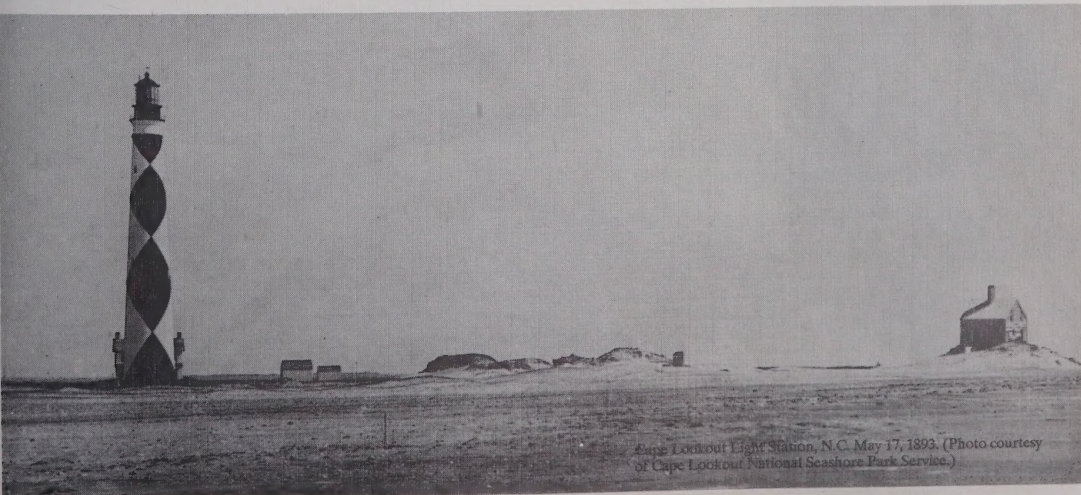
The Federal Government's next priority was in constructing lights at the two most hazardous and dangerous areas for shipping along the east coast, Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout.

Cape Hatteras is a tough place for navigating even in the daylight and under the best of conditions. The collision of the northbound Gulf Stream and the southbound remnant of the Labrador current results in heavy seas and great numbers of shifting sandbars that extend for some fourteen miles seaward. Lighted in 1803, the completion of Cape Hatters light left only one other major unmarked hazard on the Carolina coast, the Cape Lookout shoals.

The construction of the 1812 lighthouse at Cape Lookout fulfilled a longtime ambition of North Carolina and the United States; to provide safer waters for trade and commerce and to prevent loss of life and property. And yet, America was still new to lighthouse construction and techniques. The call for better taller, and brighter lights made these first lights obsolete in a short period of time.

Not one of these original four lighthouses is standing today but, they were the pioneers. The lessons learned from them have served their successors well, for they have lasted well over a hundred years. The first four lighthouses in North Carolina helped to end the darkness that hung over trade and commerce and started a new day of economic and maritime development dawning.

*Connie Mason is the History Museum Specialist at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort, N. C. A special thanks to Connie for the cover sketch of the "Aleta".*



Cape Lookout Light Station, N.C. May 17, 1892. (Photo courtesy of Cape Lookout National Seashore Park Service.)



## Sea Level

them. Many homes, stores, sawmills and fish houses were greatly damaged.

The hurricane of September 1933 is one that will long be remembered. This was one of the worst known to our people. The wind velocity was certainly the greatest ever recorded. The sea water covered at least 95% of Sea Level. Homes were washed away from their foundations and stores, also were washed away. A father and his three sons were lost in this hurricane. (His father's name was Jimmy Hamilton and for that reason the storm is called the "Jimmy Hamilton Storm" by most residents of eastern Carteret County.) Many homes registered a depth of several feet of sea water. Property damage was high as storm winds blew and rolling waves swept across the community to meet the incoming surge of the ocean waves after the Outer Banks or beach became broken into several inlets.

The hurricane of 1944 was almost as destructive as sea water covered most of the Sea Level community. Houses and boats were damaged.

Carol, Edna and Hazel (Hazel washed out the North River Bridge) visited our coast in the fall of 1954 doing considerable damage to the coast and flooding Sea Level. Again damage was done to buildings and boats.

The last great hurricane was named Ione (September 20). This storm was equally as destructive as the other bad ones. Fish houses, stores, and warehouses were washed away. Sea tide covered most of the community. Boats and nets were greatly damaged. No loss of life was reported. Repairing and rebuilding resulted in a great loss of time.

*Harrell Cullen Taylor, Sr. was born at Sea Level in Carteret County in 1898. He became a successful businessman and served as trustee for a local bank and two terms as a member of the Carteret County Board of Commissioners. He received an official patent for an "oyster dredge" and was Notary and unofficial historian for the community until his death in 1968. "Data on Hurricanes for Sea Level, Carteret County" was made available to Mailboat by his daughter, Lena Taylor Respass, of Sea Level, N. C.*

## Ocracoke

of the worst to hit Ocracoke. "It seemed like to me," recalled Miss Sara Ellen, "that the ole August storm was the worst one we ever had. The day before it hit that night was a pretty time. The sky was clear and the sun was out pretty. We didn't have too much of a way to be informed that a storm was about to hit in those days. There was a Coast Guard Station down toward Hatteras Inlet. This was before they built the one here in the village, and sometimes some of the men from that station would keep us informed.

"When it hit that night, we had to leave home because the tide started to come in our house. I lived with my mother and father at the time in a house not far from the water tower. Anyway, when it hit, we left and went over to this old woman's house called Miss Arcade. Her house set on high ground and I reckon a lot of people knew this because the house was packed. I believe Lillian was there. 'oh yes,' said Miss Lillian, 'I was there. I'll never forget it. That's where we spent the night, too, me and Mommie. Poppie and Buddy were below fishing at the fishing camps when it hit, and we were here by ourselves. About the time the tide started to come in our house, Uncle Howard, Sara Ellen's daddy, came and got us and took us over there with him and Aunt Lot. I believe Sara Ellen was there with 'em too.

"Well, weren't long 'fore the tide started to come in their house too, and we finally had to clear out and go to Uncle Kit's and Aunt Nancy's. Uncle Kit weren't there but Aunt Nancy was. Not long after night, the tide even come in their house and we had to get out of there and go to Miss Arcade's.

"Ole Jones had just started to build his house near there, and the lumber was strewed everywhere. When we started to wade over there, Uncle Kit put me down and I got straddled on a piece of that board. The tide was a-swirling around and they had to grab me, for I reckon if they hadn't, the tide would have swept me out.

"Miss Arcade's house was on high land, you see, and when we got there, youngerns, the house was packed. Let's see, there was Miss Mid and all them, Miss Missouri and all them, and I don't know how many more. There was so many there that the boys and men had to get down on the floor and under the beds to give the womenfolk a place to sit down.

"And during the hardest of it -- youngerns I'll never forget it -- Miss Annie Gaskins started praying. Weren't no time after she had prayed that somebody went out and said that weren't a drop of water to the step. It had gone out that quick.

"It was a mess when we got back to the house. The tide had gone clear past the weatherboarding on the house and the inside was the biggest mess anybody'd ever seen. Youngerns, that was a bad storm.

"Next day, Poppie and them had to tie their boats to the trees and travel up. They had to wade up to their waists in most places along the ole tracks they used to go back and forth on. In some places Poppie would have to carry Buddy back on his back it was so deep."

My grandfather, Elisha Ballance, was with Miss Lillian's father and brother when they were trapped at the fishing camps located ten miles north of the village. When the full strength of the hur-

ricane hit, my grandfather and seven other fishermen had to take shelter in small valleys of a nearby sand dune. After being stranded without food or drink for several days, they were finally able to walk back to the village on Friday, August 18. As they waded through water sometimes four feet deep, they counted approximately one hundred cattle and horses that had drowned.

An article that appeared in the August 21 edition of the *Washington Gazette* reported that the "whole island of Ocracoke is a complete wreck as a result of the fierce storm which swept the entire coast of North Carolina." The article also stated that waves twenty and thirty feet high pounded the beach, and the tide was four to five feet all over the island. Thirty-three homes were also damaged, many boats were sunk or destroyed, and there was "much suffering" due to a lack of food and drinking water.

There are many stories associated with the 1899 hurricane. My grandfather told me that two porpoises swam out of the ocean and onto the flooded island. After getting lodged in the fork of an oak tree, they finally broke loose and swam into Pamlico Sound. Another man, Isaac "Big Ike" O'Neal, reported that when it appeared their house was going to wash off the foundation, his father told him to chop a hole in the floor to relieve the pressure of the rising water. After the hole was chopped through, the water rushed up toward the ceiling, carrying with it a duck that had been trapped under the house by the rising tide...

*Alton Ballance is a native "Ocracoker" and a teacher at Ocracoke school. He also serves on the Board of Commissioners for Hyde County.*



# The CA'E-BANKERS of Carteret

*Josiah W. Bailey, Sr.*

The first literate settlers began venturing into eastern Carteret County between 1650 and 1700. They found white people already living in the vicinity of Cape Lookout, westward along Shackleford Banks, northeastward along Core Banks to Portsmouth Island, and Ocracoke. Harkers Island and Cedar Island were populated; other islands was well. There likely were many more tenable islands in the sounds then than now. Sea Level was significantly lower; it has risen some eight inches in only the last century.

There was also a substantial native Indian population living in these places, more or less as neighbors. Apparently, a certain degree of friendship and cooperation prevailed; there are no folk tales or other indications of hostility. The white population spoke English, but could neither read nor write.

That was an uncommon accomplishment even among less isolated people. They did not own land individually but used it as a common asset like the air and adjacent waters. They lived by hunting and fishing, often moving there simple one room dwellings to be near productive hunting or fishing areas according to the seasons.

When asked how they came to be here, and where they'd come from, their answer was, "we've always lived here." Their origins remain an enigma today, and the subject of much local conjecture; the appealing explanation of descent from the famed Lost Colony is voiced occasionally, particularly on Cedar Island. The truth may be more complex.

In any event, Cape Lookout figured prominently in their story, and, in time, many of them came to refer to themselves as "Ca'e bankers," obviously a contraction of Cape Bankers? Or was it "Cay-bankers," referring to the Spanish word "cay," a low sandy island?

Cape Lookout is the central cape of the three great coastal promontories which punctuate the "outer banks" of North Carolina. This chain of sand banks stretching from the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay to the mouth of the Cape Fear River forms what the late Gretchen Guthrie, "Banker" poet, aptly termed a "chancel rail" enclosing a sanctuary, the Carolina tidelands. Midway, these "banks" converge in a near right-angle jutting into the North Atlantic, Cape Lookout. North of this Cape, the coastline trends northeastward; south of it, the trend is westward. On the westward side of this abrupt juncture, nature has contrived the best natural, deep water harbor between Charleston, South Carolina and the Chesapeake Bay. One result of this is that Cape Lookout is not merely a

prominent geographical feature, it is a point of major historical interest.

In 1524 when Verrazano sighted these banks, somewhere north of Cape Fear, he noted the land trended toward the east. Only between Cape Lookout and Cape Fear would he find such a trend. He also found a friendly native population of significant numbers. It is not known how long before him, they had been living there. A fair guess may be thousands of years.

Sixty years later Arthur Barlow reported to Walter Raleigh that he found among the natives, children with "very fine auburn and chestnut coloured hair," compelling evidence that north European adventurers had been "fraternizing" with the native women at least thirty years earlier. It may have begun, indeed, with Verrazano's visit in 1524.

The arrival in 1585 of Ralph Lane and over a hundred men for the purpose of exploring and establishing a colony for Raleigh produced a quantum leap in the Europeanization of the natives. Lane's first landing in "Florida" was reported as follows:

"On the twenty-third (June), we were in great danger of a wreck on the Cape of Fear. The next day, we anchored in a harbor where we caught so much fish as would have brought us twenty pounds in London."

Cape Lookout is about eighty-five miles northeast of Cape Fear, a relatively easy day's sail. It was the only harbour in the vicinity. Furthermore, Lane did not describe the usual practice of putting out small boats to explore anchorages of uncertain depth, such as inlets and river mouths. They just sailed in and anchored in obviously deep water. Only Cape Lookout Bight (i.e. harbor) afforded the seaman such luxury. Cape Lookout, therefore, has the practically certain distinction of being Lane's first landing site in North America.

The second day following, these first colonists sailed up the coast to "Wococon" (perhaps, Ocracoke), put out their small boat to explore the inlet, entered it, and set up their base for exploring the Pamlico Sound area. Once the base was established, Lane adopted the practice of keeping a lookout party "down the beach" to warn of possible Spanish attack (Spain claimed this coast at the time) or other approaching ships. Cape Lookout is the logical point for such a lookout post. It is reasonable to infer that, indeed, its name was acquired from this practice. These



## South River

Pamlico Sound, forcing it up the mouth of Neuse River and flooding the whole area. Accompanying that were small tornadoes.

Late on Friday afternoon the wind seemed to shift to the north, sometimes seeming to come from all directions. Around midnight to 1 o'clock in the morning Saturday, the wind came around to the northwest and pushed ocean and sound water into the Neuse River. From, there a deluge of water hit South River, Lukens, and all of Merrimom Township. The winds were fierce, marked officially at Cape Lookout at 105 mph.

Families in the area became isolated in their own homes... When the water came over the lower floors, they retreated to the upper floors. Some had only attics. At our house, owned by my father, William Lindsey Cannon, my mother sent us younger children upstairs. The water rose eight inches in our house before it began to subside sometime before daybreak.

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*"The family was plunged into the water. James was clinging to his father's neck. The mother had the baby and Mr. Oilhouse had Hazel by the hand. When they surfaced, the baby and youngest girl were gone."*

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The highest location in the area was the road at our house, and as soon as people realized their homes were being washed away or destroyed, families got into small boats and left. It was dark, and water was everywhere.

When these folks finally reached our homes, they would knock on the side of the house wanting to come in. They came all morning, wet, tired, scared and hungry. Papa and Mama took them in and gave them dry clothes, something to eat and a place to rest. More than 50 people were sheltered in this one house by noon on Saturday. Some stayed for a time afterward, until they could return to their homes.

The Free Will Baptist Church ... became a true sanctuary for people, although it had been washed from its blocks. Some families lived there while their homes were repaired or rebuilt. The storm left some houses torn from their blocks or foundations and destroyed others. Many lost all their belongings.

Three houses survived without extensive damage, the homes of William L. Cannon, John Mason and Sam Gaskins. Those were two story houses. During the night, two huge oak trees in the front yard of our house were blown over. They came to rest against the house, and some thought they may have sheltered the dwelling from further damage.

The Louis Cannon family narrowly escaped being killed when their home was destroyed. Mr. Cannon was my half-uncle and lived about a mile away from our house at the mouth of Hardy Creek (formerly Martin's Creek).

Papa was worried about his brother and his family, but there was no way we could get to him during the height of the storm. When he thought the water was low enough for him to go outside and check on them, he plunged in up to his neck. There was nothing to do but wait until the water subsided.

Finally, my father saw Uncle Lewis' older son, Pete, coming up the hill. The water was up to his neck at times, but by swimming and wading, he finally reached our house and told of his family's plight.

The wind and tide had torn their house apart while the family was inside. Louis, his wife and daughter and five sons

moved into the attic. And when the house came apart, they were carried some distance before the upper part of the house snared in tree tops. The family stayed there until the water level lowered and Pete could go for help. Luckily, they all were brought to safety.

At Sam Gaskins' farm ... the family was sheltered to wait out the storm. Sam's sister, Ella Delamer, lived across the road from him and refused to leave her small, one-story home and go to the bigger house.

She told her brother that she would be safe as long as she could see the light from an oil lamp she placed on a table near the window. All night long, the light shone, but when Sam went to see her the next morning she was dead.

The water had risen in the house, lifting the table with the light without putting it out or turning it over. She had drowned during the night. Hers was the only death in the immediate area, but tragedy struck also in Merrimom and Back Creek.

At Back Creek, my uncle Elijah and Aunt Ellen Dixon lost two of their children. The tides are usually higher in Back Creek than anywhere else, and they went to 16 feet above normal during the '33 storm.

The house where the Dixon's were staying was on one side of the bridge at Back Creek, and there was no getting back to the Merrimom side once the tide came in during the storm. It's still that way today. The area is completely cut off once storm tides move in. It was there that Elijah and his wife and their children, Hazel, 8; James, 3; and Elva Marie, 9 months; along with Albert Oilhouse, began waiting out the storm.

They were in the kitchen ... when the winds became stronger and planks began coming off one side of the house. They moved to the main part of the house, but when the tide began to rush in, they climbed into the upper floor.

Then the house was blown into Back Creek and broke into pieces. The family was plunged into the water. James was clinging to his father's neck. The mother had the baby and Mr. Oilhouse had Hazel by the hand. When they surfaced, the baby and youngest girl were gone.

Elijah found a piece of the wrecked house, and they held onto that. They were carried into the woods and stopped against a tree. Elijah grabbed the tree so the family wouldn't be swept further away. They climbed onto a limb and stayed there until the water was low enough for them to leave.

Elijah tried to care for the others until they were finally rescued by Deputy Sheriff R. E. Chaplain and George Norcum late on Saturday afternoon. The bodies of the children were found later some miles away.

Devastation was everywhere, but those who had anything left shared with those who didn't. The Red Cross helped some, too. Everyone made out the best they could, and hoped and prayed there would never be another storm such as this.

Four lives were lost. Homes boats and crops were destroyed. There were many mosquitoes, and there was disease. But I have been told that there was a sign that things would be better. The trees put out buds and leafed out just as if it were spring.

*Dollie Carraway, a South River native, is active in the Carteret County Historical Research Association, a collector of area Indian artifacts, and has written several articles on local history. This story was originally published in the Carteret County News-Times and is used with permission.*



## Places to Go

### Outer Banks History Center: Collecting Coastal Carolina *by Frank Rathburn*

For any coastal history buff or researcher, the recently opened Outer Banks History Center on Ice Plant Island in Manteo should probably be likened to Mecca. That's how important and impressive this new 6,500-square-foot division of Archives and History facility is to the state and those residents and visitors with an interest in the heritage of coastal Carolina.

Construction on the building began in May of 1987 and the staff of four moved in in May of 1988 to begin the monumental task of getting the facility ready for the public. Museum curator Wynne Dough, assistant curator, David Minor, operations officer, Sue Hanes, and collections cataloguer Virginia Ross have a tremendous amount of work to do and it is a never-ending task. The work of continually collecting and cataloguing additional material will keep the small staff busy for years to come.

The center features everything about the history of coastal North Carolina, from about 400-year-old maps and charts to recent photographs, as well as the crown jewel of the collection—the most extensive collection of coast lore ever compiled, the 175,000-item library of David Stick, well known coastal writer and researcher.

The center also boasts the art collection of the late Frank Stick, David's father, and the man who almost singlehandedly created the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, the first in the nation. The center's collection of the elder Stick's works include "The Artists Catch," the 300 watercolors of North Carolina marine fishes that were published in book form by the University of North Carolina Press in 1981.

The public gallery, a large, spacious room provides an overview history of the Outer Banks and the related northeastern coastal plain. The gallery will change exhibits every three to four months so that there will constantly be something new, and people that have been to the gallery previously will have a good reason to return. In addition to the exhibits, there will be visiting exhibits featuring the work of various individual and corporate sponsors. The first guest exhibition is one belonging to Rod Farb, a noted diver, photographer and underwater archaeologist whose book "Diving the Graveyard of the Atlantic" will be the focus of much of the material presented.

Presently under construction and nearing completion are darkroom facilities and state-of-the-art techniques for copying photographs, maps, documents and book pages. Since none of the material contained in the center may be checked out, this feature will undoubtedly be very appreciated by folks who need to spend hours pouring over old documents. While several carrels are available for use by researchers involved in long term projects, there is nothing quite as comfortable as being able to work at home.

Some of the myriad accumulations of coastal lore located in the climate- and humidity-controlled stacks include original editions, rare North Carolina histories, the works of many early North Carolina authors, records of early Outer Banks lifesaving stations, engravings, photographs and negatives, all available to the public for the first time.

Among some of the rarer treasures are various navigational charts and maps dating back to the 1500's. Cartography aficionados will relish the more than 50 North Carolina maps that predate the American Revolution as well as 70 maps and charts from the Revolution to about the time of the Civil War.

Other fascinating items available for inspection include the nearly 4,000 U. S. Coast Guard wreck reports recorded between 1892 and 1926, outlining the daring beach rescues by turn of the century guardsmen. Imagine, a ship founders off shore. There were not 27 Whalers with twin 200s to aid in the rescue. A horse was hitched to the front of the incredibly heavy lifesaving craft, and with the aid of six or eight crew-members, the tiny ship was launched into the crashing surf. That's when they started rowing. Lifesaving is no piece of cake these days, but it doesn't have much in common with what those guardians of the lonely outbacks on the Banks went through 100 years ago.

Curator Wynne Dough is a mild mannered young individual with an obvious love for the task of sorting, filing, cataloguing and assembling this voluminous collection of material. His is a meticulous, tedious job made brighter by the fascination he has for the material he is dealing with. "We are trying to be as complete and thorough as possible," Wynne said, "with a system of reference that will enable you to find a piece of information three or four different ways. Two hundred years from now, historians may be more interested in the sawdust than the lumber. I'm trying to make sure both items will be here."

Another fascinating aspect of the center's vast array of coastal material is found in the approximately 5,000 photographs belonging to the late Aycock Brown. Brown was the first manager of the Dare County Tourism Bureau, and as Sue Hanes said, "He took pictures of just everything." She shakes her head and gives a wan smile. "And I mean everything. Some of the photos and scrapbooks that he kept are so unique as to literally be priceless." As an overall view of the quarter century of life on the Outer Banks at a period when the transition from a fishing economy to one of tourism was just beginning to escalate, Aycock Brown's observations in prints, negatives, notes and scrapbooks are valuable additions to the center's collections.

The Outer Banks History Center operates as a branch of the Division of Archives and History, with a 15-member advisory committee which meets quarterly. Hours of operation for the reading room are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Staff members can be reached weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The stated goal and purpose of the center is to "preserve the cultural and human heritage of the Outer Banks and to encourage public interest." They are doing an excellent job, and anyone with an interest in the history of our state, old books, manuscripts, maps, pictures, works of art, and much, much more would undoubtedly be well rewarded by a visit to this new addition to the state's treasure collection.

The Outer Banks History Center is located in Manteo, at the end of State Hwy 400, adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth II Visitor Center. For more information, contact the Center at P. O. Box 250, Manteo, N. C. or call 919-473-2655.

(Reprinted from *This Week*, Carteret Publishing Co., Morehead City, N. C. June 7, 1989.)



## Did you know?

Welcome, continued from page 1

our past today; and third, to "hold onto" this for future generations. Both culturally and environmentally we are threatened. What can we do?

The Mailboat seeks to be a "voice" -- a means of communication, like the mailboat of yesteryear. We want to help in the exchange of information and ideas; a sharing of all that is good about the Carolina coast ... and how to hold onto it.

We are volunteers, as are all our contributors. The cost of the newsletter goes to cover printing and distribution only. We will not seek advertising or supports -- only subscriptions from those truly interested in the coastal people -- its past, present, and future.

Again, welcome! We hope that this will be the first of many regular "visits" together. Let us hear from you

K.W.A. & J.G.H.

CAE BANKERS continued from page 5

colonists, over a hundred men, remained in these parts for practically a full year.

Francis Drake, with a fleet of twenty-three ships, arrived unexpectedly and fortunately in time to rescue them from the growing hostility of some of the mainland natives... Two years later, the famous "Lost Colony" arrived in the Pamlico area...

By the end of the seventeenth century, the "Banks people" were not distinguishable in appearance from other Europeans. Their customs, however, reflected native Indian culture. Their boats were dug-out canoes (locally known as "log-canoes"). Some had fire-arms, but ammunition was scarce and expensive; they frequently stalked and captured small game and waterfowl bare-handed, a talent sometimes employed into the twentieth century by local hunters following the stealthy techniques handed down from father to son.

## Ocracoke Preservation Society

The future Ocracoke museum and convention center has been moved to the National Park Service land between the ferry parking lot and the Park Service maintenance garage. Thanks to the generous donations of money, time and materials by visitors and islanders alike, the move was successfully made in January. Since that time a fence and large sign have been added to the site. It is expected that foundation work will begin during the fall and winter months on the former David Williams house that was donated to the Ocracoke Preservation Society by Scott and Kathy Cottrell.

The Williams house, thought to be built between 1884 and 1890, is a two story frame house characterized by a fairly steep hipped roof and interior chimneys. The windows are two over two and window pegged. The house was once surrounded by two fences, the larger enclosed area was called the pound for grazing horses and cows. A smaller fence inside the pound enclosed the house and gardens from the animals.

David Williams was the first chief in charge of the USCG station on Ocracoke. His uniform and hat are waiting to go on display in the museum along with the original records of the life-saving service dating from the 1800's to the 1940's.

The Preservation Society guidelines call for foundation work, re-roofing, interior restoration and finally, removal of the asbestos siding and refinishing the original siding. A group headed by Karen Lovejoy, Charles Runyon and David Esham are using a book, *Grant Seeking in North Carolina*, to aid in contacting organizations that have made grants for preservation in the past.

The Society is actively accepting donations of money, photographs of island structures (for authenticity of restoration) or volunteer services to be supervised by the Park Service. Contact Ocracoke Preservation Society, Inc., Box 491, Ocracoke, NC 27960 or for offers of volunteer help on any phase, stop in at the Post Office in Ocracoke and leave your name and area of expertise with Anita Fletcher.

Reprinted from the Ocracoke Preservation Society Newsletter by permission.

Throughout the seventeenth century European ships increasingly availed themselves of the Cape Lookout harbor. It was the ideal departure point for vessels returning to Europe from the "Indies." The Gulf Stream sped them northward to that fine harbor where it was possible to heave the ships down for bottom maintenance, where there was plentiful fresh water, and where game and fish were cheerfully provided by a friendly native population, many of whom were, for all intents and purposes, "kinfolk."

To be continued in subsequent editions.

Josiah Bailey is a local historian and storyteller and Captain of the Diamond City sailing ferry to Cape Lookout.



## Book Reviews

### *Troubled Waters*

Glenn Lawson

©1990, Hadnot Creek Publishing Co., Swansboro, NC.

Troubled waters means troubled people, troubled economy, troubled way of life. The WRAL-TV Town Meeting and documentary, broadcast in the fall of 1988, dramatically brought to our attention the fact that the North Carolina coast is in crisis. Walter Cronkite, who has often sailed our coastal waters, made a special trip to our shores a few months later and ringingly confirmed the analysis, stating that "Only ... an aroused ... constituency will ... be able to turn things around."

Shortly after the town meeting, Glenn Lawson took a one year leave of absence from his job at a development laboratory in Research Triangle Park and moved to the coast to conduct his own examination of the problem. His resulting

book, *Troubled Waters*, describes in vivid, direct, conversational terms the problems behind the main environmental stories that have been in the headlines of our newspapers and on TV in 1989-90.

Through dozens of personal interviews and commentaries, Lawson reports the concerns of a broad range of people—fishermen, seafood dealers, everyday citizens, environmentalists, residents, visitors, working scientists, businessmen, developers, lawyers, and both elected and appointed government officials. The plight of the commercial fisherman is especially clear. Their catches of our once-renewable seafood are way down, and the future of them and the entire seafood industry is in doubt.

Lawson's book explains in simple terms what the conditions are right now, how they came to be that way, and what

Continued on page 10

### *Strengthened by the Storm*

Joel Hancock

©1988, Campbell & Campbell, Morehead City, NC.

According to Say's economic law: "Supply creates its own demand." Some books occasionally illustrate this law. They are written in response to a need perceived only by their authors. *Strengthened by the Storm* is such a book; Mr. Hancock has enriched us all. The need he perceived at its inception, we recognize as soon as we read it.

It is the story of the entrenchment of the "Mormons" on the isolated Harkers Island in Carteret County on the central coast of North Carolina at the turn of the twentieth century.

Coastal North Carolina was so dominantly Methodist and Baptist, the establishment of Mormonism at that time in that remote place so unlikely, it ought to have provoked wonder in anyone fascinated by strange events. Yet none

thought to research and relate this history until Mr. Hancock did so some ninety years after the events.

It is a story of gallantry, fortitude, and triumphant faith. But it is also a painful story of ignorance, bigotry and raw religious animosity and conflict among neighbors and family. Perhaps that is the reason it has been ignored until now. The pain was just too great, the wounds too fresh.

In retrospect, we know that the final outcome is a happy one, but that was not always certain, and it is well that the story has been put together now while eyewitness, participant, memories remain reliable.

*Strengthened by the Storm* is presented as documented history. It achieves more, I suspect, than its author ever intended.

It offers the historian a wealth of detail based on thorough research, well foot-noted.

For the novelist or screen-play writer, it offers, in addition, a near classic case of human emotional and physical

Continued on page 10

### *Ocracokers*

Alton Ballance

©1989, UNC Press, Chapel Hill, NC

### *Ocracoke Portrait*

Ann Ehringhaus

©1988, John F. Blair, Winston-Salem, NC.

Ocracoke Island has been the subject of innumerable articles, features, ghost tales, and works of art. Writers, journalists, poets and artists all have tried to capture the uniqueness of Ocracoke. No two people have accomplished that more effectively than Alton Ballance and Ann Ehringhaus.

Alton Ballance, Ocracoke native, has told the stories only a native could. The attachment to his homeplace and his love for his people are evident throughout. For what the book lacks in documentation of specific historical facts, is overcome by his sincerity and dedication to his purpose. "The real story of Ocracoke and Ocracokers" as he explains, are "Stories of ordinary people, their struggles, pain and joy."

Being a native "islander" myself, I felt a kinship and camaraderie to Ocracokers I had never sensed before. Perhaps the "ordinary" people he brings to life are the same folks I grew up with on Harkers Island. No doubt the struggles have been the same ... water and weather. On an island those two forces decide everything else.

In contrast, Ann Ehringhaus' *Ocracoke Portrait* captures in photographs the images that a native might overlook.

Familiarity with the lifestyle might camouflage the beauty and meaning of clamming on a summer day, fishing nets off the end of a skiff, or the weathered faces of men and women who have lived the real life of Ocracoke.

These photographs, candid and simple, blended with the conversations with islanders, work together to tell much the same story as Ballance's *Ocracokers*. "This book is a visual testament to the natural beauty and closeness of life here. May the voices and pictures speak through the pages and touch you with what they understand of the mystery."

Continued on page 10



*Troubled Waters*

we can do about it. It tells what we must do if we hope to preserve the continuing supplies of renewable natural resources that support our coastal fisheries, economy and recreation, --resources that provide the base for a way of life so many North Carolinians and visitors enjoy. Like Walter Cronkite, Lawson sees the truth according to Pogo -- "we have met the enemy, and they are us."

Rachel Carson often came to our coast while writing her famous book, *The Sea Around Us*. She followed this with her vastly important environmental book, *Silent Spring*. Glenn Lawson may well be the new North Carolina Rachel Carson. His book is extraordinarily clear and sound. Its timing will make it a major contribution to Earth Day, April 22, an event designed to launch the state and nation into the environmental decade of the 90's. Many experts believe we have either to do something definite and constructive during this decade to protect our natural resources or we will go past the point of no return.

Among the many interviews in the book is one in which a high official in the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources told Lawson, "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die. And nobody wants to pay to clean up our waters."

But clean up our waters we must. This book makes that point very clear to the reader. We must spend whatever effort, time, money and commitment is necessary. To do less is simply suicidal.

This book can profitably be on everybody's reading list.

Tom Quay  
Professor Emeritus, NCSU

*Strengthened by the Storm*

conflict, reconciliation and resolution. The setting is rugged, primitive, and beautiful. The novelist needs only to fictionalize his characters and weave them into the history revealed by Mr. Hancock.

It also is of broad sociological interest for this story is a microcosm of the "Mormon Persecutions" in other parts of the U.S. during the mid-nineteenth century. We need this reminder that "it can happen here"-----and did not long ago!

Finally, it is an inspirational testimony not only for Mormons everywhere but for all who value the principle of "freedom of religion" and who must remain constantly willing to make the sacrifices, to "pay the price", and to endure, as these people of Harkers Island did. We do not have to subscribe to their beliefs to be awed by and to admire and honor their achievement, for it was our freedom as well as theirs that they preserved.

As I said at the outset, Joel Hancock has enriched us all; we have only to read his remarkable book.

Josiah Bailey

*Ocracokers & Ocracoke Portrait*

For anyone that has ever been to Ocracoke, or ever wants to, these two books provide a glimpse of what can be found there. What a joy it would be here to have such a priceless collection of history for every coastal community. As "progress" continues to erode at our shorelines as well as our lifestyles and livelihoods, the distinctiveness of each "once isolated village" will become even more treasured.

Karen Willis Amspacher is editor of *Island Born & Bred* and is Publisher and co-editor of *The Mailboat*.

Pitts, continued from page 1

of Carteret are the most irregular of any North Carolina county and except for the approximately 25 miles of "straight line" land delineation in the northwest quadrant, those lines are entirely defined by water.

The topography of low-lying land dominated by water and weather resulted in a people dependent upon and sustained from the water. The majority of the populace and their communities were settled on creek, river, bay or "the Sound." And so, as with commerce and social activities, Postal Service was also dependent on water routes and the Post Offices were placed where a "mail boat" could and would deliver.

Carteret County has had fifty-eight separately named Post Offices, the preponderance of them served by boat. The County Seat, Beaufort, when laid out as "Porte of Beaufort," was situated on Taylor's Creek. With access to Bogue Sound and the Beaufort Inlet outlet to the Atlantic, here was a water-dominated settlement that was the location of Carteret's first Post Office (the first records of her Postmaster, John M. Verdin, is dated 7 October 1794.)

From Beaufort the mail was distributed to outlying areas. It has not been so long ago that residents cannot remember the "Aleta" or the "Ida" leaving from the "Post Office Docks" to deliver the mail down east. Before the advent of motorboats, sailing skiffs were used to transport the mail. Thomas "Pat" Parkin's grandfather was such a carrier. If the wind did not blow he "poled," for if the "mail did not get through" he was penalized - his contract required that he pay a fine to the Post Office Department.

Only when the bridge was built to Harkers Island in 1941 did Kelly Willis cease transporting the mail from Beaufort by mailboat. Even then he continued to do so from the Island to the Cape. In 1955 author Carl Goerch traveled from Atlantic to Ocracoke on the mailboat "Dolphin," with Captain Ansley O'Neal. At Portsmouth Henry Pigott, a black resident paid \$50/ month by the Postal Department, came out in his skiff to receive the mail: "Miss Salter (the Portsmouth Postmaster) was aboard ... She got into Henry's skiff, along with her suitcase, two crates containing milk, another containing some bread and several smaller packages. Then Henry pushed his skiff away from our craft and started poling back to shore."

As Goerch noted; "The arrival of the mail boat was the big event of the day ..."

Mr. Pitts, author of *The Town Fathers of Beaufort: 1723-1988*, is writing a *Postal History of Carteret County*. © 1989 by P. & C. Publications. (Used by permission.) All Rights Reserved.



## What do you think?

### *Hill's View Commentary by Eddie Hill*

Growing up in the small fishing village of Atlantic, it was always easy showing "upstate" relatives and friends where I was from. All I had to do was break out the always reliable Phillip's 66 map of North and South Carolina and point to the spot that laid farthest east along the protruding Carolina coastline and there we were. Or, in even simpler terms, I could always say that Atlantic was where Highway 70 East either began or ended, depending on whether you were coming or going. Atlantic, by most accounts, was either the beginning or the end of the Earth, the deciding factor being whether the narrator was an optimist or a pessimist.

Now, as the wide boundaries of this planet Earth becomes increasingly smaller and closer, it seems almost everyone knows where Atlantic is. "Oh what a unique and wonderful place it is" or better yet, "this place is so different from any other place found on the coast" are two of the reoccurring statements uttered by visitors. It seems to many Atlantic should stay the way it has always been, rebuking time and progression, content to remain the quaint little fishing village on the sea.

For a majority of the population, nothing could be finer than to retain the traditional ways of the Hunting Quarters, the name Atlantic used to go by, and continue making a living from the sea. The only problem with that it seems, is that our great white fathers up north, or to be more exact, our industrious leaders to the west, do not seem to share in this feeling of preserving the old way of life. With each year, more and more regulations and fees are implemented into the daily existence of a commercial fisherman, making the basic necessity of earning a living that much more difficult and harder to obtain. Sure, for an individual down on a weekend excursion to do a little fishing or maybe a little hunting, Atlantic is a great place to live. But for the 1,000 or so permanent residents, residing in an area where a good job is considered to be one which requires an individual to commute over 45 miles one way at an entry level position with the civil government, living Down East can have its shortcomings.

Now don't get me wrong, I consider myself as true of a Down Easter as anyone else, but I am also a realist. The bodies of water such as Core Sound, which have served to put food on the tables and money in the pockets of so many easterly watermen, can only produce for so long. The increasing demand placed on this critical part of the overall ecological chain is taking its toll. Each summer, more and more individuals leave the cozy confines of their particular abode and travel east in hopes of pulling just a few clams from the bottom or taking in just a few shrimp into their nets. And as the old saying goes, there are only so many slices in a pie, and for every small chunk of seafood that goes home with a non-resident, another huge chunk of an Atlantic resident's livelihood heads up the road. It never ceases to amaze me that there are not more acts of violence

or sabotage demonstrated toward these not so welcomed visitors.

But short of barricading the highway, there is really nothing that can be done to eliminate the problem per se, except for taking steps to ensure that future generations do not have to depend so entirely on this particular way of life. The most obvious means of achieving this goal is better education for the youth. The old adage of "teaching a man to fish" can easily be turned around into teach a man something else besides fishing." The same waters that are currently being destroyed by overworking and pollution could very easily become living laboratories for the purpose of studying marine biology and aquaculture. Students in this area could receive extensive learning opportunities, to be afforded a unique education, one available only in the students' backyards. Young people could be taught to protect and preserve these waterly wonderlands and this small section of the world could become the envy of educational institutions all over for its innovative and resourceful system. In short, the aquatic existence enjoyed by Down East residents could be used as a springboard for future scholars in all walks of marine life and other careers as well, as once the young minds were exposed to learning other than the traditional "three R's", the mentally-stimulated youth would have the sky as their limit.

So Down East residents, now is the time to begin taking steps to ensure a promising future for the generations to come. Take the initiative and let's begin exploring the possibilities for tomorrow. Then maybe, this naturally beautiful area can be known for its ingenious inhabitants, and not just for its scenery.

*Eddie Hill, native of Atlantic, is a freelance writer and part-time commercial fisherman. He also helps-out at his father's business, Winston Hill & Sons, the oldest country store downeast.*

**We welcome your response to this topic, as well as any questions, thoughts or ideas you would like to share!**

*The Mailboat is a publication of Coastlore, P. O. Box 3, Harkers Island, NC, 28531 (919) 728-4644 or (919) 728-5716. Editors & Publishers, Karen Willis Ampsacher & Joel G. Hancock. Our thanks are extended to all who contributed their time and talents to this issue of The Mailboat.*

*Does The Mailboat come to your favorite bookstore? Let us know the name and location of the shop, and we'll send them a copy! Or they can call or write to us at the above address. Tell your school and/or local library too. We need your help to make this a success!*



## Coastal Calendar

- April 7 & 8: COASTAL CELEBRATION, co-sponsored by the North Carolina Maritime Museum, the North Carolina Coastal Federation, and WRAL TV. State Fairgrounds, Raleigh, NC (We'll be there, stop by and say hello!)
- April 28: Carteret County Waterman's Association Annual Boat Show, Crystal Coast Civic Center, Morehead City, NC
- May 5: Crab Festival, Ocracoke, NC
- May 5 & 6: Traditional Wooden Boat Show, North Carolina Maritime Museum, 315 Front St., Beaufort, NC
- May 26 & 27: Arts & Crafts Coalition Show \* Sale, Beaufort Historical Association Grounds, Beaufort, NC
- June 1: Deadline for articles, letters, calendar events, etc to be included in the Summer edition of *The Mailboat*

Coming next issue ... Stories from Portsmouth Island ... The Outer Banks of North Carolina during the Civil War ... Student Essays ... Summer Calendar ... Out of the way places ... more on the CA'E Bankers ... Downcast yarns ... We're open to suggestions!



Coastlore is a network of writers, historians, teachers, collectors, folklorists, artists, crafters, and preservationists who are keenly interested in the cultural heritage of North Carolina's coast. Its purpose is to record and share the unique character of this area, its people, and its maritime history and traditions. Together we hope to establish a resource for anyone seeking to learn more about the distinct culture of Carolina's coastal region.

"The Mailboat," Coastlore's quarterly newsletter, will provide a means of exchange for all whose interest in this area reaches not only to the past, but also is concerned about the future of this changing lifestyle. It will include reviews from local books, features from contributing writers and students, a calendar of cultural events, and information on preservation efforts within the communities of Carolina's coast. A subscription will also include a 10% discount on all purchases from Coastlore's catalog of books, prints, and collectibles.

Join us as we strive to keep the real beauty of coastal Carolina alive. It is our belief that those who genuinely care about the coast of North Carolina—the people, their lifestyles, the environment—can preserve and protect this culture from the changes taking place. We can hold on to the things that make Carolina's coast a uniquely beautiful place. May all of us—natives, newcomers, residents, and visitors—share with one another our love for this truly special place.

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